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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2422  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 8868  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5751  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 3785  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2799  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9204  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 2911  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1984  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6310  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4315  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0979  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0343  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000135

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STATE FOR SA/INS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY BURNS DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS AND  
IRAN WITH SRI LANKAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAMARAWEEERA

Classified By: AMB JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD, REASON 1.4. (B AND D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On January 23, Undersecretary Burns met with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera. The Foreign Minister told U/S Burns that Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) remains committed to negotiation and a peaceful solution despite continued provocation by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the North and East. He also expressed the belief that an end to the violence is not in sight and the LTTE may try to retake the Jaffna peninsula in the next few months. U/S Burns brought up Iran and the UN and reiterated the importance of Sri Lanka's support. Samaraweera expressed his willingness to bring up the issue with President Rajapaksa. U/S Burns provided assurance that the United States has not reached a decision on its position regarding the next UN General Secretary. END SUMMARY

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BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE?  
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12. (C) The Foreign Minister led off the meeting by telling U/S Burns about the successful all-party political conference that took place January 20. He indicated that this was the first time that all political parties, including the opposition, met. Excluded from the conference was the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), the political front for the LTTE. Minister Samaraweera explained that the government believed that the southern (i.e. Sinhalese and Muslim) parties needed to come to some agreement on how to move forward before including the TNA in the discussions. He reported that the conference resulted in a unanimous decision that peace talks between GSL and the LTTE should begin immediately. "War is not an option," said Samaraweera. The GSL will continue to take the high ground in responding to continued LTTE provocations and it realizes that the consequences of a return to war would be disastrous for Sri Lanka. He did caution, however, that it is getting more difficult to control some of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) reactions to the attacks in the North and East.

13. (C) Samaraweera said that this unanimous decision sent a strong signal to the LTTE that a consensus is emerging in the rest of the country and expressed his hope that this "southern consensus" would be able to pressure the LTTE to return to negotiations on the ceasefire agreement (CFA). He also reported that the LTTE response is bewildering to the government and that signs from the north are not encouraging.

However, Samaraweera did express the GSL's willingness to return to the negotiating table in almost any venue. He mentioned that there are several possible locations, but that conducting the first round in Oslo would be politically unacceptable to some of President Rajapaksa's hard-line supporters. Samaraweera indicated, however, that the GSL was willing to consider Oslo as one location in a multiple round of negotiations and said they would be willing to look at alternate venues the LTTE may suggest.

14. (C) U/S Burns reiterated Secretary Rice's earlier pledge of support for GSL efforts to return to negotiations and that the USG recognizes the difficulty of the current situation. He underscored the importance of the GSL maintaining flexibility and not rising to the LTTE's provocation. U/S Burns said that Norway and the United States would make a joint statement following his meeting with Norwegian International Development Minister Erik Solheim the afternoon of January 23. He also promised that he would call EU Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner upon his return to Washington to ask that the EU list the LTTE as a terrorist organization. He also promised to ask Secretary Rice to raise the listing of LTTE with the EU.

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FUTURE ACTION IN JAFFNA?  
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15. (C) Samaraweera said that despite the confusing signals from the LTTE, it appeared that on the ground in the LTTE-controlled territory, people did not want a return to war, which was encouraging. The FM said the LTTE might try to retake Jaffna in the near future. The GSL expects that any possible action would take place before May, when the Tamil Nadu elections are scheduled to take place. The Indian government would more likely remain silent against such an attack prior to elections. Asked if such an attack on Jaffna would be successful, Samaraweera mused that it could be. Over the past four years, the SLA strength in Jaffna has decreased substantially; without help from the outside, the GSL could lose control of Jaffna, Samaraweera said. U/S Burns reported that Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran told him in their recent meeting that India's role will be more helpful and supportive to Sri Lanka, and U/S Burns promised that the USG would remain in close touch with India on Sri Lanka.

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IRAN AND THE UN  
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16. (C) Turning to Iran and the UN, U/S Burns explained the USG position on Iran and said that Sri Lanka's vote on February 2 at the extraordinary session of the IAEA Board of Governors will be very important. Samaraweera initially responded that Sri Lanka would prefer to remain neutral, but agreed that seeing a draft copy of the resolution in advance of the vote would be helpful. He promised that once he received a copy of the draft resolution, he would discuss it with President Rajapaksa and the cabinet. U/S Burns promised to send the draft resolution and indicated that both he and Ambassador Lunstead are available at any time for further discussions. Samaraweera opined that the GSL should begin a media campaign to help shape public opinion in favor of reporting Iran to the UN Security Council. Ambassador Lunstead promised that the Embassy would support them in this

endeavor.

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NEXT UN SECRETARY GENERAL  
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17. (C) U/S Burns expressed USG concern about the glacial pace of reform in the UN and the desire to see serious reform take place. He reiterated USG support for the UN and the desire to see the next UN Secretary General undertake a serious effort to reform the UN. U/S Burns repeated that the United States has an "open mind" and has undertaken no commitments on the next UNSYG. He noted that while Jayantha Dhanapala, Sri Lanka's candidate for UNSYG, is a distinguished candidate, both the Thai and South Korean candidates have been lobbying hard for the position. He offered to meet with Dhanapala when he came to Washington in April and introduce him to others in Washington.

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COMMON INTERESTS  
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18. (C) At a lunch hosted by Foreign Minister Samaraweera later on January 23, U/S Burns and the FM exchanged remarks which underlined the historic friendship between the U.S. and Sri Lanka, the democratic values shared by the two countries and the unstinting U.S. support for the peace process.

LUNSTEAD